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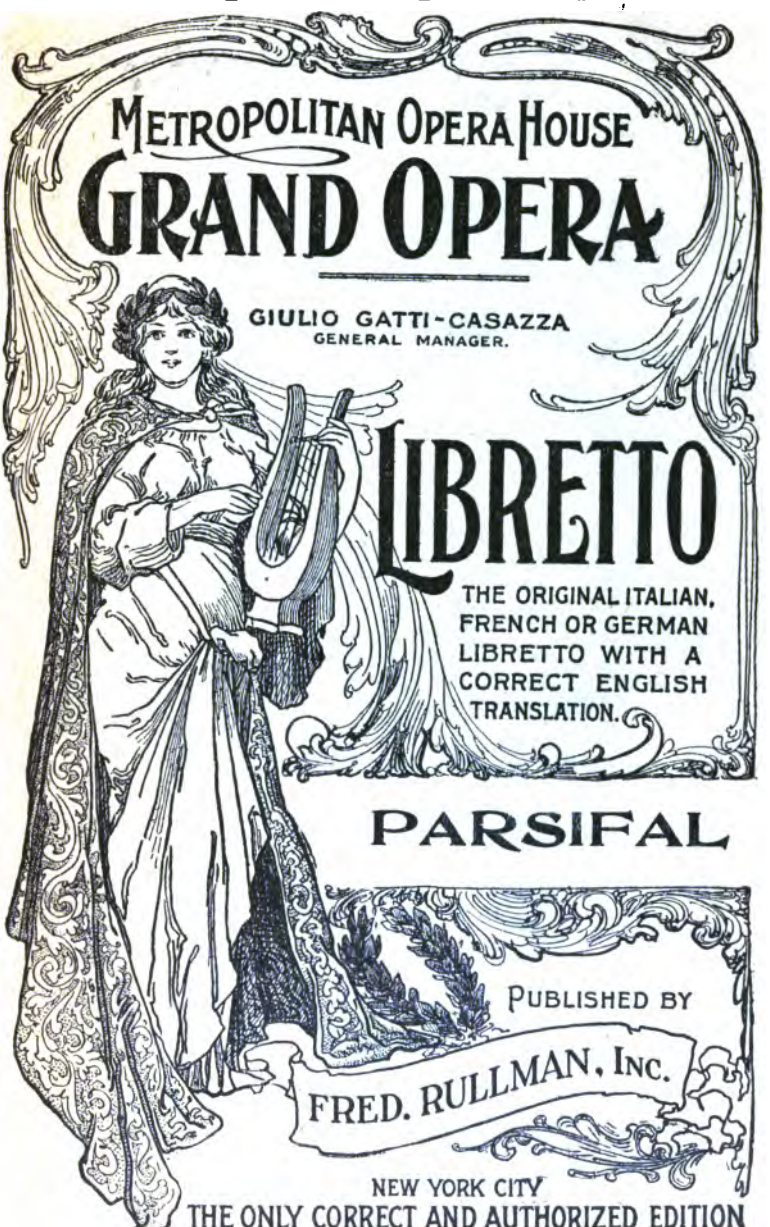

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RICHARD WAGNER'S

PARSIFAL

TRANSLATED
AND ADAPTED FOR PERFORMANCE
IN ENGLISH

By
HENRY EDWARD KREHBIEL

WITH THE STORY OF THE DRAMA, ANALYTICAL NOTES
AND MUSICAL THEMES

AS PERFORMED AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE
IN NEW YORK

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PARSIFAL

A FESTIVAL DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

AMFORTAS	Baritone
TITUREL	Bass
GURNEMANZ	Bass
PARSIFAL	Tenor
KLINGSOR	Bass
TWO KNIGHTS OF THE GRAIL	Tenor and Bass
FOUR ESQUIRES	Sopranos and Tenors
KLINGSOR'S FLOWER MAIDENS	Six Solo Sopranos and Two Choirs of Sopranos and Contraltos
THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE GRAIL	Tenors and Basses
YOUTHS AND BOYS	Tenors, Sopranos and Contraltos

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THE STORY OF "PARSIFAL"

(From *A Book of Operas*, by Henry Edward Krehbiel, by permission of The Macmillan Company, Copyright, 1911.)

A lad, hotfoot in pursuit of a wild swan which one of his arrows has pierced, finds himself in a forest glade on the side of a mountain. There he meets a body of knights and esquires in attendance on a king who is suffering from a wound. The knights are a brotherhood of men whose mission it is to succor suffering innocence wherever they may find it. They dwell in a magnificent castle on the summit of the mountain within whose walls they assemble every day to contemplate and adore a miraculous vessel from which they obtain both physical and spiritual sustenance. In order to enjoy the benefits which flow from this talisman, they are required to preserve their bodies in ascetic purity. Their king has fallen from this estate and been grievously wounded in an encounter with a magician, who, having failed in his ambition to enter the order of knighthood, had built a castle over against that of the king, where, by practice of the black art and with the help of sirens and a sorceress, he seeks the ruin of the pure and celestial soldiery. In his hands is a lance which once belonged to the knights, but which he had wrested from their king and with which he had given the dolorous stroke from which the king is suffering.

The healing of the king can be wrought only by a touch of the lance which struck the wound, and this lance can be regained only by one able to withstand the sensual temptations with which the evil-minded sorcerer has surrounded himself in his magical castle. An oracle that had spoken from a vision which one day shone about the talisman, had said that this deliverer should be a guileless fool, an innocent simpleton, whom compassionate pity had made knowing:

"Through pity knowing,
The blameless fool:—
Wait for him,
My chosen tool!"

For this hero, king and knights are waiting and longing, since neither lotions nor baths nor ointments can bring relief, though they be of the rarest potency and brought from all the ends of the earth. The lad who thus finds himself in this worshipful but woful company is himself of noble and knightly lineage. . . . But he has been reared in a wilderness, far from courts and the institutions of chivalry and in ignorance of the world lying beyond his forest boundaries. His father died before he was born, and his mother withheld from him all knowledge of knighthood, hoping thus to keep him for herself. One day, however, he saw a cavalcade of horsemen in brilliant trappings. The spectacle stirred the chivalric spirit slumbering within him; he deserted his mother, followed after the knights and set out in quest of adventure. His mother died of a broken heart.

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In the domain whither his quarry had led the lad, all animals were held sacred. A knight rebukes him for his misdeed in shooting the swan and rue leads him to break his bow and arrows. From a strange creature in the service of the knights, he learns of the death of his mother, who had perished for love of him and grief over his desertion of her. He is questioned about himself, but is singularly ignorant of everything, even of his own name. Hoping that the lad may prove to be the guileless fool to whom knowledge was to come through pity, the knight escorts him to the temple, which is the sanctuary of the talisman whose adoration is the daily occupation of the brotherhood. They walk out of the forest and find themselves in a rocky defile of the mountain. A natural gate-way opens in the face of a cliff through which they pass and are lost to sight for a space. Then they are seen ascending a sloping passage, and little by little, the rocks lose their ruggedness and begin to take on architectural contours. . . . At last they arrive in a mighty Byzantine hall, which loses itself upward in a lofty, vaulted dome from which light streams downward and illumines the interior. Under the dome, within a colonnade, are two tables, each the segment of a circle. Into the hall there come in procession, knights wearing red mantles on which the image of a white dove is embroidered. They chant a pious hymn as they take their places at the refectory tables:

"In fellowship and union
We gather day by day;
And thus in sweet communion
The blest rite we essay."

The king, whom the lad had seen in the glade, is borne in on a litter, before him a veiled shrine containing the mystical cup which is the object of the ceremonious worship. It is the duty of the king to unveil the talisman and hold it up to the adoration of the knights. He is conveyed to a raised couch and the shrine is placed before him. His sufferings of mind and body are so poignant that he would liever die than perform his office; but the voice of his father, who had built the sanctuary, established the order of knighthood and now lives on in his grave sustained by the sight of the talisman, admonishes the king of his duty. At length, he consents to perform the function imposed upon him by his office. He raises himself, painfully, upon his couch. The attendants remove the covering from the shrine and disclose an antique crystal vessel which they reverently place before the lamentable king. Boys' voices come wafted down from the highest height of the dome, singing a formula of consecration:

"Take my body and eat,
Take and drink of my blood,
Of my great love the token."

A dazzling ray of light flashes down from above and falls into the cup which now glows with a reddish purple lustre and sheds a soft radiance around. The knights have sunk upon their knees. The king lifts the luminous chalice, moves it gently from side to side, and thus blesses the bread and wine provided for the refection of the knights. Meanwhile, celestial voices proclaim the words of the oracle, another choir ecstatically hymns the power of faith and at the end an impressive antiphon, starting

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with the knights, ascends higher and higher, and, calling in gradually the voices of invisible singers in the middle height, becomes metamorphosed into an angelic canticle as it takes its flight to the summit.

The lad disappoints his guide. He understands nothing of the solemn happenings which he has witnessed, nor does he ask their meaning though his own heart had been lacerated with pain at sight of the king's sufferings. He is driven from the sanctuary with contumely. He wanders forth in quest of further adventures and enters the magical garden surrounding the castle of the sorcerer. A number of knights who are sent against him he puts to rout. Now the magician summons lovely women clad in the habiliments of flowers to seduce him with their charms. They sing and play about him with winsome wheedlings and cajoleries, with insinuating blandishments and dainty flatteries, with pretty petulancies and delectable quarrellings. But they fail of their purpose; as does also an unwilling siren whom the magician evokes with powerful conjurations. It is *Kundry,* who is half Magdalen, half wicked sorceress; a messenger in the service of the pious knights (and as such hideous of aspect), a tool in the hands of the magician (and as such supernaturally beautiful. It was to her charms that the suffering king had yielded. To win the youth she tells him the story of his mother's death and gives to him her last message and—a kiss! At the touch of her impure lips a flood of passion, hitherto unfelt, pours through the veins of the lad, and in its surge comes understanding of the suffering and woe which he had witnessed in the castle on the mountain. Also a sense of his own remissness. Compassionate pity brings enlightenment; and he thrusts back the woman who is seeking to destroy him. Finding that the wiles of his tools have availed him naught, the wicked magician, himself, appears to give battle; for he, too, knows the oracle and fears the coming of the king's deliverer and the loss of the weapon which he hopes will yet enable him to achieve the mystical talisman. He hurls the lance at the youth, but it remains suspended in midair. The lad seizes it, makes the sign of the cross, speaks some words of exorcism and garden, castle, damsels—all the works of enchantment—disappear.

Now the young hero is conscious of a mission. He must find again the abode of the knights and their ailing king, and bring to them surcease of suffering. After long and grievous wanderings, he is again directed to the castle. Grief and despair have overwhelmed the knights, whose king, unable longer to endure the torture in which he has lived, has definitively refused to perform his holy office. In consequence, his father, no longer the recipient of supernatural sustenance, has died, and the king longs to follow him. The hero touches the wound in the side of the king with the sacred spear, ends his dolors, and is hailed as king in his place. The temptress, who has followed him as a penitent, freed from a curse which had rested upon her for ages, goes to a blissful and eternal rest.

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ACT I.

(The opening of the curtain discloses a landscape lying within the domain of the Knights of the Grail. It is a forest glade over which the surrounding trees cast a shade which lends it solemnity without gloom. The region is that of the northern mountains of Gothic Spain. From the middle foreground there is a gradual slope downwards to a deep-lying forest lake. At the left is seen the beginning of a path which leads to a castle on the summit of Monsalvat, built by Titurel, founder of the Knights of the Grail, to be their domicile and the sanctuary enshrining the sacred relic of which they are the guardians. This relic is the Holy Grail, the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper with his disciples and in which His blood was caught when His side was pierced on the cross.

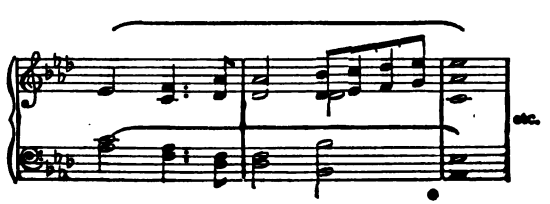
Day is breaking and Gurnemanz, Knight of the Grail, a man of years, but still vigorous, lies asleep with two youthful Squires under a tree. From the direction of the Castle fall the sounds of the morning call:)

Gurnemanz:

(Waking and rousing up the Squires)

What ho! Wood-wardens ye?
Sleep-servitors, rather.
Awake at least with the morning.

(The solemn call is continued:



and the two Squires leap up.)

Hear ye the call? Give thanks to God
That grace is granted ye to hear it.

(He kneels with the Squires and they silently offer their matin prayer.)

Now up, young gentles! Look to the bath,
Await our royal master's coming. *(He looks towards the left.)*
The litter bearing him in pain
Advancing couriers show is near. *(Two Knights enter.)*
All hail! How fares Amfortas, knights?
Full early he his bath is seeking.
The balsam which Gawaine's
Valor, skill and art procured,—
I trust it served to ease his pain?

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Second Knight:

You do but trust, you who all things know?
More keen and poignant the pains
And torments soon return'd;
Sleepless, in sheer exhaustion,
He bade prepare an early bath.

Gurnemanz:

(*Bowing his head, mournfully*)

Fools are we to hope for melioration
Where only cure can ease him.
Seek ev'ry simple, ev'ry lotion,
Near and far throughout the world,
There's but one healing,
But one healer!

Second Knight:

And who is he?

Gurnemanz:

(*Evasively*)

Look to the bath.

(*The Squires have had their attention called to the background and are looking to the right.*)

Second Squire:

See there! The devil's dam again!

First Squire:

The mane of her hellish mare wildly streaming!

Second Knight:

Ha! Kundry 'tis!

First Knight:

No doubt she brings tidings.

Second Squire:

The mare is reeling!

First Squire:

Has the creature wings?

Second Squire:

She's skimming now along the ground!

First Squire:

Her long mane is sweeping the moss.

Second Knight:

She hurls herself down from the beast!

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Kundry:

(She rushes hastily upon the scene almost staggering. She wears savage garb, tucked high on her hips and held by a girdle of snakeskin with long, dangling ends. Her black hair flows loosely; her complexion, dark brown. She has piercing black eyes which at times blaze wildly but oftener are dull and staring. She hurries to Gurnemanz and thrusts a small crystal flask into his hands.)*

Here—Take this—Balsam!

Gurnemanz:

Whence brought you this lotion?

Kundry:

From distant lands which you know naught of.
Should its virtues fail
All Araby yields
Nothing else for his relief!
Ask me no more.—I am weary.

(A train of squires and knights, carrying and accompanying a litter upon which Amfortas lies appears upon the scene from the left.)

Gurnemanz:

He comes, borne on his bed of torment.
Ah, woe! What grief my heart oppresses
At sight of one, in lordly manhood
The master of a conqu'ring race,
Now to affliction fall'n a slave!
More gently. List! The master groans.
(The squires stop and set down the litter.)

---

* "*Kundry* draws her elements from the Grail romances, from Christian legends, from fairy tales and from the profoundest depths of the poet's imagination. In the Welsh tale her prototype is the hero's cousin who is under a spell, and in accordance with the popular tale formula appears as a loathly damsel until her kinsman achieves the vengeance demanded by family ties. Then she appears in her true form as a handsome youth. In Wolfram *Kundrie la Sorcière* is only the Grail Messenger, and as such is hideous of appearance; the temptress of the Magic Garden is a beauteous damsel named *Orgeluse*. Wagner united both attributes in his creation. As a penitent, seeking atonement for sin committed, she is a loathly damsel. As a siren she is a tool of *Klingsor*, to whose power she is subject while asleep. She has innumerable prototypes in fairy-lore who are released from wicked spells by the kisses of handsome princes, the fidelity of husbands or the granting of their wills, as in 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine'."—*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*, by H. E. Krehbiel, page 194.

Kundry's emotions and activities are characterized by several *motivi*, of which the principal ones are (a) its rhythm, suggesting her wild ride, and (b) which publishes her tumultuous life under the curse pronounced against her.

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*Amfortas:**

Thanks! Thanks! 'Tis well. A moment's rest.
A night of torture borne,
Now nature's glorious morn!
The lake again
My heavy load shall lighten,
Shall ease my pain
The night of gloom shall brighten. Gawaine.

Second Knight:

Gawaine, my lord, is not here.
When that the healing herb
He found through arduous labour
Did but thy hopes deceive,
Upon another quest at once he hurried!

Amfortas:

Unsanctioned? He shall pay the forfeit
For slighting thus the Grail's command!
Ah! Woe betide the heedless hero
If into Klingsor's snare he falls!
Leave me in peace with my affliction
Until comes he, of blest prediction:
"Through pity, knowing"—
Was't not thus?

Gurnemanz:

'Twas thus we oft were told.

Amfortas:

"The blameless fool.—"
Methinks I could proclaim him
Dared I but "Death" to name him!

---

* "The visible symbol of suffering among the personages of the play is *Amfortas.* He, too, has come into the Christianized legend from the secular romances and folk-tales. In the earlier forms he is simply the representative of unsatisfied vengeance, symbolized in the bardic emblem of the bleeding lance. In the French romances and Wolfram's poem he is a royal fisherman. But always, even in the Welsh tale, he is a sufferer whose healing depends upon the asking of a question by a predestined hero. In the Mabinogi of *Peredur* (the Welsh Percival) and the French romances the question goes simply to the meaning of the talismans which are solemnly displayed. Wolfram deepens the ethical significance immeasurably by changing it to 'What ails thee, Uncle?' It is the sympathy thus manifested that brings the fisher-king's sufferings to an end; and the failure to ask the question on the first visit . . . is the cause of the long wanderings and many trials which test and temper the religious nature of *Parsival.* Wagner, by ignoring the question which plays so important a part in all the other versions, and making the healing of *Amfortas* depend upon a touch of the sacred lance, has gained a theatrical effect at the expense of a profoundly beautiful ethical principle."—*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama,*" by H. E. Krehbiel, page 186. This is the musical symbol of the suffering *Amfortas:*

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Gurnemanz:

(Handing Kundry's flask to Amfortas)

Patience, lord, give trial to this lotion.

Amfortas:

Whence came this strange, fantastic flask?

Gurnemanz:

For thee from distant Araby, a moment since.

Amfortas:

Who was't that brought it?

Gurnemanz:

The hag who yonder lies.
Come, Kundry, up!

(Kundry refuses to obey, and remains lying on the ground)

Amfortas:

You, Kundry? Am I again your debtor,
You willing, tireless slave?
Ah well! The lotion I must needs essay
If but to requite your true devotion.

Kundry:

(Throwing herself restlessly about)

No thanks! Ha, ha!—How can thanks help thee?
No thanks. Quick! Quick—the bath!

(Amfortas gives the sign for departure and the train moves away towards the deeper background. Gournemanz gazes mournfully after it. Kundry, who has remained behind with him, still lies upon the ground. Squires come and go.)

Third Squire:

Hey, witch-wife!
Why lie you there like a savage beast?

Kundry:

Are not even beasts here sacred?

Third Squire:

Aye, sacred they, 'tis true;
But you leave us still in doubt.

*Fourth Squire:**

With her infernal brew, I fear,
She'll work our master's certain destruction.

Gurnemanz:

Hm! Does she bring harm to you?
When ye stand sore perplex'd
How best to send tidings to distant countries
Where our knights are in danger
You scarcely know where—what then?

---

*The passages in smaller type are omitted in the performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

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Who, ere ye have gathered your wits
Flies away in the tempest's wild track
A message bearing to them and back?
No food she asks nor aid from you,
Naught in common hath she with you;—
But if danger be near, and need of aid,
Her zeal e'er lends her the wings of the wind.—
But ne'er a wish for thanks you'll find.
Strange fancy! If this be baneful,
Her malice to you is gainful!

Third Squire:

She hates us all.
But look! What venom in her sullen glance.

Fourth Squire:

A pagan she—a sorceress.

Gurnemanz:

True.
Mayhap a curse upon her lies,
On earth to stay
Till purg'd away
Be sins and crimes long since committed
Which in their day were unacquitted.
Meekly repentant, in deep sadness,
To our knightly guild her deeds bring gladness.
In all she does much goodness lies,
Help for herself and sacrifice.

Third Squire:

But is't not she who is to blame
That o'er us grief and suff'ring came?

Gurnemanz:

Aye.
Oft it chanc'd when she was gone a space
Some dire misfortune came apace.
I've known her many years
But Titurel knows her much longer.
The day our walls were consecrated
He found her in the underbrush.
Benumbed, lifeless she lay.
And thus again I found her lately,
E'er the misfortune did befall
Which the sorcerer o'er the mountain
So shamefully on us has wrought.

(*To Kundry.*)

Here, you! Listen and speak;
Where were you wandering about
What time our lord the lance did lose?
(*Kundry maintains a morose silence*)
Why then in vain did we seek your help?

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Kundry:

I never help.

Fourth Squire:

She says't herself.

Third Squire:

If faithful she and free from fear
Then send her in quest of the missing spear.

Gurnemanz:

(Gloomily)

Peace. That were idle;
'Gainst it there lies a ban.
(With deep emotion)
O, wondrous, marvellous,
O wound-hallow'd spear!
I saw thee brandished
By sacrilegious arm.
(Lost in retrospection)
Whilst it was thine, Amfortas, all-too-daring,
What pow'r could ever harm thee,
What magic e'er disarm thee?
Within yon walls our hero, led astray,
To wicked woman's wiles, he falls a prey
In her embraces long he lingers,
The spear falls idly from his fingers.
A cry of pain. —I thither fly,
See Klingsor, laughing, disappear
And bear with him the sacred spear.
The king's retreat I valiantly defended,
But on his body saw a wound distended—
A woful wound, the which will ne'er be whole!

(The First and Second Squires return from the lake)

Third Squire:

Then thou knewest Klingsor?

Gurnemanz:

(To the Squires)

How fares our master?

First Squire:

Refreshed by the bath.

Second Squire:

The balsam eased the pain.

Gurnemanz:

O, woful wound, the which will ne'er be whole!

(The Third and Fourth Squires having already seated themselves at the feet of Gurnemanz, the others now take places beside them under the tree.)

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Third Squire:

Wise father, pray speak, we beg of thee—
Thou knewest Klingsor—how might that be?

Gurnemanz:

Titurel, the godly king,
Knew Klingsor well.
What time the pagan horde with craft and might
The realm of our true faith did menace,
Down came to him, in sacred, solemn night,
A host, our Saviour's messengers angelic.
The cup, which pass'd at that Last Supper holy,
That sacred cup, that vessel consecrated,
Which caught His blood when on the cross He died,
And eke the sacred lance which pierc'd His side—
The holy proofs of love's great sacrifice—
These to the keeping of our king they gave.

*To guard it well he reared a temple.
And ye, to service hither bidden,
Who came by paths to sinners hidden,
Know pure alone are wanted—
Them brotherhood is granted;
For service 'mongst the poor, oppress'd and lowly
The Grail doth give them vigor holy.

Hence 'twas denied to him, tho' hard he strove,
—Klingsor—to join the holy brotherhood.
Alone, secluded, to yonder valley went he,
Mid heathen groves a habitation built.
Wherein he sinn'd that never has been told me;
There by sore penances he sanctity invok'd.
Unable thus to deaden sinful inclination
He turn'd his hand against himself
In hope the Grail he thus might gain.
With scorn the impious act the master spurn'd
And Klingsor's rage to fearful purpose turn'd:
His wretched sacrifice in vain
To magic's vile art he would attain.
Nor long did wait.
The desert soon became a gorgeous garden
Where damsels bloom'd with charms infernal.
There for the Grail's pure knights he lies in waiting,
With lust his trap deceitful baiting.
Whom he ensnares is lost forever,
And many fall to his endeavour.

Old Titurel, his strength not daring measure
His son endowered with the treasure.
Amfortas, fir'd by pious zeal,
With valor rash turn'd gainst the ill.
The sequel need not be retold:
The spear is now in Klingsor's hold;
When he the saintly ranks has thus depleted
The holy vessel's rape he sees completed.

Fourth Squire:

Our duty's plain: the spear we must retrieve!

Third Squire:

Ah! Happy he who shall the quest achieve.

---

* Omitted at the performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

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Gurnemanz:

Within the plunder'd sacristy
Amfortas knelt, devoutly praying,
From heav'n a sign of aid invoking.
A radiant light shone from the holy vessel,
A voice celestial spoke in accents clear
Words which around the sacred cup were glowing:

Squires and Knights:

"Through pity, knowing,
The blameless fool;—"

(Cries and calls from Knights and Squires are heard from the direction of the lake; Gurnemanz and the four Squires start up and look about in alarm.)

Squires and Knights:

(Behind the scenes)

Ah! Woe! Who is the miscreant?

(A wild swan flutters with weary wings from the lake followed by Knights and Squires.)

Look! See! A flutt'ring swan!
See! He is wounded. Ah, pity!
Shameful!

(The swan, after a feeble flight, falls exhausted to the ground. The second Knight pulls an arrow from its breast.)

Gurnemanz:

Who did the deed?

First Knight:

A happy omen seemed it to our master
When o'er the lake came circling the swan.
Then sped a shaft—

Squires and Knights:

*(Dragging in Parsifal)**

'Twas he! Yes, he! Here is his weapon,
Here the shaft like all the rest.

---

*"We find *Parsifal* on his entrance only a thoughtless, impetuous forest lad, unlearned in the affairs of life, utterly unconscious of its conventions—in short, another Young Siegfried. He is the hero of the (Keltic) 'Great Fool' stories, but in the process of Christianizing the character a new meaning has been given to the epithet. He is a chosen vessel for a divine deed because he is a pure, or guileless, fool. In this, though the suggestion was derived from the old Aryan folk-tales we are obliged to see a new, a Christian symbolism, the spirit of which may be found in Christ's words, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a *little child* shall not enter it.' In Wagner's conception of the legend it was necessary that the hero be one as guiltless of all knowledge of sin as he was of the necessity and nature of salvation. Enlightenment was to come to him through compassion, or fellow-suffering, and this enlightenment was to enable him in turn to resist temptation and bring surcease of suffering to *Amfortas, Kundry* and the community of the Grail knights."—*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*, by H. E. Krehbiel, page 174.

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Gurnemans:

Was't you who killed the gentle creature?

Parsifal:

None else. In flight I never miss my aim.

Gurnemans:

Then this your deed! Does it not fill you with dread!

Knights and *Squires:*

Let him be punished!

Gurnemans:

Monstrous, cruel deed! You could do murder
Here in sacred woodland,
Where peace received you in its arms;
Whose native dwellers met you without fear—
Gave you asylum and love!
Cheering chant of birds rang from each leafy bough.
What harm did the faithful swan?
His mate fondly seeking, he took wing
In circling flight across the cool wave
Its health-restoring virtues to renew.
Naught thought you of this: to test of skill
Alone it prompted idle desire.
He had our love;—What is he to you?
Here, behold! Here struck your shaft—
Cold clots of dark blood!
Look! Limp hang his pinions—
His snowy plumage soiled with red stains!
Lustreless his eye,—Gone is its light!

(*Parsifal, who has listened to Gurnemans with growing emotion, now breaks his bow and throws his arrows away.*)

Are you not conscious of evil doing?

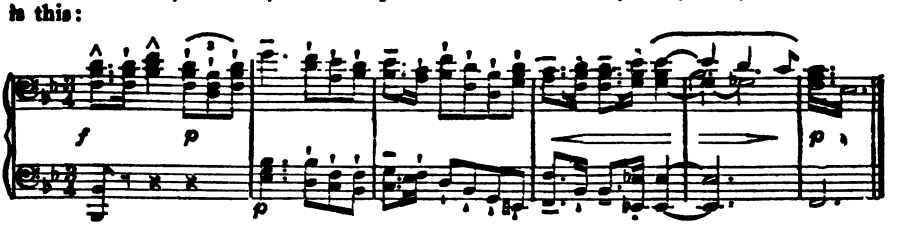
(*Parsifal rubs his eyes as if bewildered*)

Why did you commit this crime?

Parsifal:

I knew naught of crime.

The brilliant, militant, chivalresque musical delineation, or symbol, of *Parsifal* is this:



Parsifal's Heroic Theme.

The swan dies to a reminiscence of the "swan harmonies" in "Lohengrin." There is a similar use by Wagner of a musical quotation from his own works in "Die Meistersinger" when *Hans Sachs* refers to the story of Tristram and Iseult.

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Gurnemanz:

Whence did you come?

Parsifal:

That know I not.

Gurnemanz:

Who is your father?

Parsifal:

That know I not.

Gurnemanz:

Who guided you to this region?

Parsifal:

That know I not.

Gurnemanz:

What name have you?

Parsifal:

Once I had many
But none of them can I recall.

Gurnemanz:

You know then nothing at all?
(So dull a fool I never saw
Save Kundry there!)

(*To the Squires*)

Be off!

Do not neglect our master's bath;—
Give aid.

(*The Squires having placed the dead swan reverently upon a bier of fresh branches, carry it away toward the lake. Gurnemanz, Parsifal and Kundry—to one side—are finally left alone.*)

Now speak!
Of all I've asked you know nothing;
Now tell me what you know; within your ken
There must be something.

Parsifal:

Yes!
I have a mother—Herzeleide, her name.*
Mid trees, in a houseless wilderness
Was our home.

* "Parsifal's mother does not enter the drama, but is only spoken of; yet a typical phrase is allotted to her, and is introduced for the first time under circumstances that are profoundly poetical and pathetic. *Parsifal* is being questioned by *Gurnemanz*. To all interrogations save one, he has the single answer, 'I do not know.' Asked his name, he answers: 'Once I had many, but now I remember none.'

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Gurnemanz:

Where got you your weapon?

Parsifal:

Myself made the bow to drive the hungry eagles
From the forest.

(Kundry, who often, during Gurnemanz's narrative of the fate of AMFORTAS, *had repeatedly and uneasily thrown herself about, still lying upon the ground, after keenly eyeing Parsifal, who has remained quiet, calls out hoarsely.)*

Gurnemanz:

Yet gentle would seem your birth, your lineage knightly.
How came it, then, you were never taught
Use of weapons more worthy?

Kundry:

A widow'd, grief-stricken mother
Bore him when in battle perish'd Gamuret.
From fate like his to save her darling son,
Secluded, strange to arms, unguided,
A fool, she reared the stripling in folly!

Parsifal:

Yes!
One day along the edge of the wood
There came a troop of shining men,
On splendid beasts mounted. Much I longed
To be like them; but, laughing,
They hurried away. I followed fast
But never could overtake them.
O'er waste places sped I—o'er hill, down dale;
Oft fell the night—then came the day—

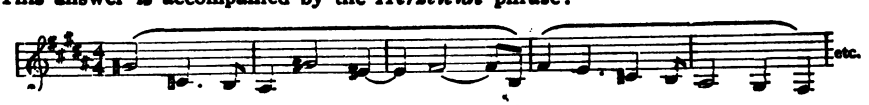
(Kundry has risen and approached near to Parsifal and Gurnemanz.)

My trusty bow never fail'd me,—
From huge men and beasts it sav'd me.

Kundry:

Aye!
Robbers and giants oft felt its bite!
The lusty young stripling taught them to fear him.

This answer is accompanied by the *Herzeleide* phrase:



Symbol of Herzeleide.

"To find the clue to this somewhat enigmatic proceeding resort must be had to Wagner's model, Wolfram, where it is said of the lad's mother that

'A thousand times she said, tenderly:
Bon fils, cher fils, beau fils.'

"These were the names which *Porsifal* once knew but had forgotten. They are associated in his mind with his mother, and therefore the allusion is accompanied by the *Herzeleide* phrase."—*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*, by H. E. Krehbiel, page 189.

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Parsifal:

(*In surprise.*)

Who has fear of me?

Kundry:

The wicked.

Parsifal:

Those who'd have harmed me—were they bad?
Who is good?

Gurnemanz:

(*Laughs, then grows serious.*)

Your dear mother whom you deserted
And who now pines and grieves for you.

Kundry:

She grieves no more.—His mother is dead!

Parsifal:

(*Horrified.*)

Dead? My mother? Not so!

Kundry:

I saw her die as I was passing;
To you, poor fool, she sent greeting.

(*Parsifal springs upon Kundry in a rage and seizes her by the throat. Gurnemanz restrains him.*)

Gurnemanz:

Impetuous madman! Murder again?
What wrong has she done?
She spoke but truth; for Kundry
Never lies though much she has seen.

(*After Gurnemanz has freed Kundry, Parsifal stands for a space, as if incapable of motion.*)

Parsifal:

My strength leaves me!

(*As soon as Kundry has recognized Parsifal's condition she hurries to a forest spring and now brings water in a horn, sprinkles his face and offers him a drink.*)

Gurnemanz:

Well done. 'Tis like the Grail's compassion.
He evil bans who returns good for ill.

Kundry:

(*She turns away, sadly, and while Gurnemanz busies himself with paternal concern over Parsifal, she creeps, unnoticed by them, towards a thicket in the woods.*)

Good—do I never. For rest
My longing. For respite. Ah,
How weary!—Slumber.—O,
That no one would wake me.
No!—Not sleep! Terror grips me!
—Vain to resist.—The hour is come!
Slumber—I must.

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(Movements in the region of the lake become apparent and finally the train of knights and squires is seen bearing the litter towards the castle. Kundry sinks down into the underbrush, unobserved.)

Gurnemanz:

From fresh'ning bath the king returns;
It draws toward noonday.
Unto our pious love-feast now let me lead thee;
If thou art pure the Holy Grail
Will quicken and feed thee.

(Gurnemanz has gently placed Parsifal's arm around his own neck, and supporting him around the waist, leads him slowly away.)

Parsifal:

Who is—the grail?

Gurnemanz:

I may not tell;
But so thou be of its election
Thou'lt learn the truth through its direction.
And lo! Methinks it was not idle chance
That led thee o'er the drear expanse.
To none the secret is confided
Save him who by the Grail is guided.

Parsifal:

I scarce have moved, yet seem t' have gone apace.

Gurnemanz:

My son, observe, here time doth change with space.

(As Gurnemanz and Parsifal walk there is a gradual transformation of the scene. The forest is left behind and the path leads through a rocky defile which leads up to the Castle of the Grail. They enter a columned hall with a cupola crowning a vast dome overarching a refectorium.)

Gurnemanz:

Now give good heed; let me discern,
So thou be fool and pure
What lesson 'tis that's vouchsafed thee to learn.

(Doors are opened from both sides in the background. A train of Grail knights march in from the right and take places at the tables.)

The Knights of the Grail:

In fellowship and union
We gather day by day,

(A procession of Squires crosses the scene towards the background.)

And thus in sweet communion
The blest rite we essay.

(A second train of Squires crosses the hall.)

Who pious deeds doth do
Shall here his strength renew
Behold the mystic sign,
Partake of food divine.

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Youths:

*(Their voices sounding from the mid-height of the dome. Amfortas is carried in on a litter by serving knights. Before them walk the four Squires bearing the veiled shrine of the Grail. This train moves toward the middle of the background where there stands a raised couch to which Amfortas is assisted from the litter. Before the couch stands an oblong stone table upon which the youths place the Grail in its pall.)**

For mankind's transgression
Mid pangs without measure,
As once His blood he offer'd—
To the blest Redeemer
Out of a heart's joyful treasure
Our blood is proffer'd.
The body He in ransom gave
Shall live in us beyond the grave.

Boys:

(Their voices floating down from the uppermost region of the dome.)

True faith to prove
Descends the dove,
The Saviour's gracious token.
Drink of the wine,
Oblation divine,
And take the life bread broken.*

(After all have taken their places and absolute quiet has been restored, the voice of Titurel is heard from a vaulted niche in the background back of the couch, as if arising from a grave.)

"Among the oldest manuscripts which contain the Quest story, there are two which make no mention of the Holy Grail as a Christian relic or symbol. The most interesting of these is Welsh and is known as the Mabinogi (i. e., the Juvenile Tale) of 'Peredur, the Son of Evrawc.' It is an Arthurian story, and the majority of its adventures are identical with those of Percival . . . . The Holy Grail of the Percival romances is replaced by a bleeding lance, a bloody head on a salver and a silver dish. . . . In the French romances the talismans are the Holy Grail and the bleeding lance, the latter being identified, as in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Morte d'Arthur,' with the spear with which Longinus opened the side of the crucified Christ. . . . Until the talisman became a symbol of religion the object of the search for it was simply the performance of a sacred duty by the hero to his family, by avenging a death, healing the lingering illness of a relative, or, in some instances (which connect the Grail legends with stories of the Barbarossa kind) to bring freedom to individuals whose lives have been miraculously and burdensomely prolonged. The talisman itself is to be found in a multitude of forms from the dawn of literature down to today. In the legend of the Holy Grail it is the chalice used by Christ

'At the last sad supper with His own'

in which afterwards His blood was caught. In another form, which was that adopted by Wagner, it is given into the keeping of Titurel, who builds a sanctuary for it on Monsalvat (the Mountain of Salvation) where it is guarded by a body of knights obviously organized on the model of the Knights Templars of the crusades. It is not always a cup. Wolfram von Eschenbach describes it as a jewel. But whether stone or cup . . . . its miraculous properties are of two kinds. The first of these properties is purely physical: the talisman feeds its possessor; the second is spiritual: the talisman is a touchstone, an oracle. In the perfect form of the legend, both these properties are united, as we see in Wagner's drama: the Grail chooses those who are to serve it and nourishes them miraculously. It also predicts the coming of Parsifal . . . . The essential element in the Grail . . . . is the blood."—Excerpts from *Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*, by H. E. Krehbiel, New York. Harper and Bros.

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Titurel:

My son, Amfortas, art at the shrine?
Shall I again behold the Grail and live?
Must I perish by saving help deserted?

Amfortas:

(*Half raising himself in a posture of despair.*)

Torture! Torment! Agony!
My sire, once more, I beg thee,
Administer the rite.
Oh, live thou—and let me perish!

Titurel:

Entomb'd I live but through the Saviour's grace,
Too feeble now to give Him service.
Make thou atonement for thy sin:—
Uncover the Grail!

Amfortas:

(*Restraining the youths.*)

No! Touch not the screening pall!
Oh! Is there no one, no one here who sees the pain
The vision brings to me which you delights?
What are the torments of the bleeding wound
Against the pang, the hellish curse
Of being doom'd this rite to serve?
Grievous the duty that to me hath fallen:
I, only sinner 'mongst the sinless,
Must guard the consecrated vessel;
Unworthy, its blessing ask on the worthy!
O, judgment! Fearful retribution
From Him the Fount of Absolution!
For His most blessed benediction,
My heart is fill'd with yearning
As 'neath the weight of dire affliction
My soul toward Him is turning!

The hour draws nigh—
The light streams down upon the chalice divine—
Unveiled the cup—
(*Gazing fixedly before him.*)*

---

*Here enters the melody which forms the principal theme of the Prelude and is now heard as that of the Eucharistic hymn. (See Act I, Scene I).

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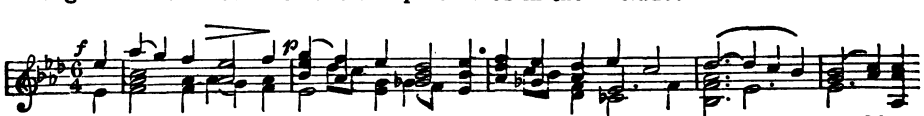
*The music of this unaccompanied canticle provides the symbol of Faith in Wagner's musical scheme as it was proclaimed in the Prelude:



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The vessel's sacred contents glow anew
With vital pow'r the knights endue.
Transpierc'd by bliss and grief and joy and pain,
The precious, redeeming flood
Pours through my longing heart again.
Alas! The tide of my weakness and sin
Comes surging back in me!
A mad, tumultuous current,
For a world of wicked lust
It fiercely seeks a warrant.
It bursts again through the gate,
Pours forth from the open wound
By spear inflicted—like that of Him
Who dol'rous stroke from that same lance received
When that our Redeemer's blest side was pierc'd,
And bloody tears in torrents
Humanity's God to humanity's shame
Poured forth in compassionate weeping.
And now alike from me, in sanctified office,
Of holiest relics the warden,
Of redeeming balsam guardian,
The fevered blood of sin doth flow,
Ever renewed from the flood of longing
The which no atoning wish can staunch.
Have mercy! Compassion!
Oh, Lord of Mercy, show me mercy!
Take back my priesthood!
End thou my anguish!
Redeem'd let me perish,
Nor longer languish!

Boys and Youths:

"Through pity, knowing,
The blameless fool;—
Wait for him—
My chosen tool."

The Knights:

Such were the words prophetic.
Wait thou in faith;—Thy duty do today.

Titurel:

Uncover the Grail!

Voices from the Dome:

Take my body and eat,
Take and drink my blood,
Of my great love the token.

(While Amfortas devoutly bows in prayer before the chalice, a growing darkness fills the hall.)

Boys:

Take my blood and drink,
Take my body and eat,
And cherish me in mind.

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(At this moment, a dazzling ray of light falls from above into the crystal vessel, which gradually glows with a ruddy, purple light, which throws a mild radiance round about.)

(Amfortas, with a transfigured expression, lifts the grail and moves it slowly in every direction, after which he blesses the wine and bread. All are on their knees.)

Titurel:

Oh, rapture celestial!
How glorious the Lord's greeting today!

(Amfortas sets down the grail which, as the twilight lightens, begins more and more to fade. The youths return the vessel to its shrine and replace the pall.)

(The youths, having closed the shrine, take up the two wine-jugs and bread-baskets, which Amfortas had blessed by exposing the grail, from the altar table, distribute the bread among the knights and fill the goblets which stand before them with wine. The knights seat themselves for the refection as does also Gurnemanz, who keeps an empty place at his side and signs to Parsifal to take part in the feast. Parsival, however, remains standing apart, silent and motionless as if in complete trance.)

Boys:

(From the uppermost heights.)

Wine and bread of last refection,
Chang'd at our blest Lord's election
By compassion's loving pow'r
To the blood, a sacred tide,
And the body crucified.

Youths:

(From the mid-height of the dome.)

Blood and body, pure oblation,
Chang'd today for your salvation,
By the grace of saving love,
To the wine for you here poured
And the bread plac'd on the board.

Knights:

Take ye the bread,
Change it again,
That strength to you be given;
Faithful in deed,
In purpose keen,
To do our Lord's will in heaven.

Take ye the wine,
Change it again,
Your life-blood newly to waken;
In knightly faith,
Trusty and true,
To battle with courage unshaken.

(The knights arise and approach and embrace each other with great solemnity. During the refection, in which he took no part, Amfortas has gradually relapsed from his state of exaltation. He bows his head and presses his hand over the wound. The youths approach him and their movements indicate that the wound has begun to bleed afresh. They give him help and lead him again to the litter. While preparations for departure are making, they carry Amfortas and the grail in the order in which they had entered, out of the hall. The knights follow in solemn procession.)

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Boys:

Blest in believing!

Youths:

Blesséd in loving!

Knights:

Blest in believing and loving!

(The last knights and squires have now left the hall. The doors are closed. During the vehement lamentation of Amfortas, Parsifal had pressed his hand convulsively against his heart for a moment; he now stands silent and rigid.)

Gurnemanz:

(Going to Parsifal and ill-humoredly shaking him by the arm.)

Why stand you still here?
Know you what you've seen?

(Parsifal clutches convulsively again at his heart and then slightly shakes his head.)

You are, then, nothing but a fool!
Get you gone! Away with you!
But take this counsel for use:
Leave in the future our swans in peace,
And seek, silly gander, a goose!

(He pushes Parsifal out of the hall and angrily bangs the door after him. While he follows the knights the curtain closes.)

A Contralto Voice:

(From above.)

"Through pity, knowing,
The blameless fool."

Voices:

(From the mid and loftiest heights.)

Blest in believing!

CURTAIN.

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ACT II

*(The scene is laid in and about Klingsor's magic castle on the southern slope of the mountains in Gothic Spain, embracing Monsalvat; but the castle faces the country of the Moors. The opening of the curtain discloses a room or dungeon in a tower which is open at the top. Stone stairs lead down to the edge of the battlements. Darkness fills the lower portion of the scene. Instruments of magic and necromancy fill the room. Klingsor is seated on the wall before a magic mirror.)**

Klingsor:

The time is come;
My art the boyish fool is luring—
With joyous shouts he nears my magic hall.
In deathly slumber her the curse holds fast
Whom I alone can liberate.
Up, then! To work!

(He descends a short distance towards the middle of the scene, and there kindles incense in a brasier. The background is at once filled with a bluish vapor. Klingsor seats himself before the magical apparatus and with mystic gestures, calls down into the abyss.)

Awake! Appear! To me!
Thy master calls thee, thou the Nameless!
Fiend Primeval! Hell's Rank Blossom!
Herodias wert thou,—what besides?
Gundryggia there—Kundry here!
To me! Come hither, Kundry!
Thy master calls! Appear!

(Kundry's figure rises up through the bluish light. She appears to be asleep. Her movements indicate that she is awaking. She utters a fearful cry.)

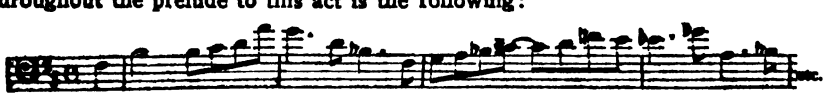
Art waking? Ha!
Again thou art fall'n in my power
Just in my time of need.

(Kundry utters a loud howl of lament which diminishes to a whimper.)

Tell me; with whom hast thou herded of late?
Faugh! With the pious rabble again,
Where like a swine they consider thee!
Is not this place more alluring
Than that of the fatuous master, thy victim?
Ha! Ha! The chaste grail-guardian, the pure one!—
What drove thee away from the saint?

---

* In the poem describing the contest of minstresly held in the Wartburg, which Wagner blended with the legend of Tannhäuser, Klingsor is a magician and minstrel of Hungary, and to him Heinrich von Effterdingen, otherwise Tannhäuser (in Wagner's conception of the story), appeals when defeated in song by Wolfram von Eschenbach, who not only composed the poem "Parzival," which is the basis of Wagner's drama, but is also the tuneful champion of true and virtuous love in Wagner' "Tannhäuser." The symbol of him and his magical power, which is heard throughout the prelude to this act is the following:



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(Hoarsely and hesitatingly, as if seeking to regain speech.)

Ah! Woe!
Blackest night!
Madness!—Ah!—Rage!
Oh, anguish!
Sleep! Sleep!
Endless sleep,—Death!

Klingsor:

Another then awaked thee!—Who?

Kundry:

Yes!—My curse!—
Oh, this longing—yearning!

Klingsor:

Ha! Ha! Longing for the virtuous Templars?

Kundry:

There—I—did service.

Klingsor:

Aye, true. Thou though'st to make atonement
For harm which thou on them did'st bring.
They bring no reward.—
All of them venal.
Let me but bid the price
The staunchest will fall,—
Yield to thy fascination,—
Fall a victim to the spear,
Which from their king himself I purloined.
The most dangerous one confronts thee today;—
His shield his innocence.

Kundry:

I—will not! No, No!

Klingsor:

Thou'lt obey me—for thou must.

Kundry:

Thou—canst not—compel me.

Klingsor:

But can control thee.

Kundry:

Thou?

Klingsor:

Thy master.

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Kundry:

And by what power?

Klingsor:

Ha! Because over me all thy charms
Do not avail.

Kundry:

(*With a shrill laugh.*)

Ha! Ha! Art thou then chaste?

Klingsor:

(*In a rage.*)

What dost thou ask, infernal witch?
Oh, direful fate!
Now am I laughed to scorn
For that once I did strive for the Grail.
Oh, direful fate!
Curst passion unsubjugate,
Hellish desire still unenthrall'd!
Which I to deathly silence had still'd.
Must it mock me to scorn
Through thee, the devil's dam?
Take good heed!
Scorn and contumely came to another—
Amfortas—strong in sanctity,
Who my appeal once spurned,
His line I blasted; unrelieved
Shall the Grail's guardian suffer in anguish.
Till I, in good time,
Take myself ward of the cup!
Ha—ha!
And wert thou not pleased with Amfortas,
The knight whom for thy pleasure I once sent?

Kundry:

Ah! Torture! Torture!
Weak e'en he.
Weak are they all,—
To their ruin my curse,
My curse all men has made subject.
Oh! Sleep!—Endless sleep!
Only release;—
How—how can I get thee?

Klingsor:

Whoe'er withstands thee
He shall set thee free.
Try the lad who is now coming here.

Kundry:

I will not.—

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Klingsor:

(Hastily ascending to the tower wall.)

Look, now he's scaling the wall.

Kundry:

Oh, sorrow! Mis'ry!
Wast for this I was wakened?
Must I? Must I?

Klingsor:

(Looking down.)

Ha! He is handsome, the stripling!

Kundry:

Oh! Oh! Woe is me!

Klingsor:

(Looking outward, blows a horn.)

What ho! My warders!
Knights! Warriors!
Heroes, up!
Foes approach!
Ha! How they rush to the ramparts
To protect their winsome witches,—
The foolish, but daring young vassals!
Come, courage! Courage!
Ha! Ha! No fear in the lad!
From valiant Ferris the sword he has wrested,
And cuts a wide swath with it through the swarm.
How vain all their courage against his rare skill!
There an arm falls pow'rless,—
Yonder another!
Ha! Ha!
They waver! They're routed!

(A cry. Kundry disappears. The bluish light has gone out; deep darkness below, but the sky shines blue above the walls.)

Each brave warrior carries home his hurts!
To all from me they're welcome!
Would all the brood of knights, the pestilent crew,
Would but thus slaughter each other!
Ha! How proudly he stands on the ramparts,
His cheeks aglow like roses in laughter,
As in childish amaze
He the deserted garden surveys!

(He turns toward the deep background.)

Ho! Kundry!

(Not seeing her.)

What? Already at work?
Ha! Ha! My charm I know full well
Which ever doth bring me thy service anew.

(Directed towards the garden.)

Ho! there! Valiant young lad!

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Whate'er prophecy may have foretold,
Within my might thou hast fallen too soon.
Thy innocence once polluted
O'er thee my pow'r will ne'er be disputed!

(He sinks into the earth with the tower. The magic garden quickly fills the space. It occupies the entire stage. Tropical vegetation and the most luxuriant splendor of flowers. In the background the limitation is indicated by the battlements of the castle wall with wings of the castle itself supported by terraces, the architectural style Arabic.

Parsifal stands on the wall, looking down into the garden, with amazement. From all sides, first from the garden, then from the palace, there rush out beautiful maidens, at first a few, then gradually more. They are clad in veils of delicate tints, which seem to have been donned hastily, as if the maidens had been waked out of sleep.)

N. B.—The ensemble of Flower Maidens consists of two groups, each enlisting three first singers; then two semi-choruses of first, second and third sopranos, each semi-chorus again divided into two parts.

Various Groups of Maidens:

Here—here was the combat;
Shouting! Clashing weapons!
Who is th' intruder?
Where is th' intruder?

Furious shouting!

Come, take vengeance!

My dear lover is wounded!
Where is my sweetheart?
Mine was gone when I wakened!

Where have they hidden?

Where is my sweet lover?
Where is my sweetheart?
Mine was gone when I wakened!

Where are our sweet lovers?

Within the castle.

Woe! Woe! O horror!

Where are our sweet lovers?
We saw them all wounded and bleeding!

We saw them seek refuge!

Up, to help them!
Up, up to help them!

Who, who is our foe?

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There—see him.
Behold! Behold!

That is Ferris' sword now in his hand.—
See! My lover's blood has stained the blade!

The horn of the master call'd;—
We all heard the alarm,—
My knight ran in haste;
They hurried all to the fray.
He struck down my lover!
He wounded my friend!

There, see him!
His sword is still dripping!
The castle he storm'd!
Woe! Oh, woe!
They hurried all to the fray
But he beat them all back.

Miscreant! Woe! Oh, horror!
Miscreant! Oh, woe! We're undone!
Ha! Upstart! Dare you come near us?
A curse on your head!
Why did you smite all our lovers?

Parsifal:

You pretty prattlers, could I help but smite them?
They tried to bar me from your entrancing abode.

Maidens:

To us you'd have come—
Knew you of us?

Parsifal:

Such fair creatures I never saw before—
Can it be wrong to call you fair?

Maidens:

You do not mean, then, to beat us?

Parsifal:

Most surely, no!

Maidens:

Yet wrongs most grievous you have done us.
You drove away all our playmates;—
Who shall play with us now?

Parsifal:

That gladly will I.

(The maidens, passing from wonder to merriment now break into a laugh. While Parsifal approaches, near and nearer to the excited groups, the maidens composing the first group and the first chorus, retire unnoticed behind the shrubbery to complete their floral adornment.)

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Maidens:

If you speak fair, come join in our play,
And if you do not chide us
In revels you may guide us.
For gold we do not play,—
In love do we seek our pay.
Would you give consolation,
Then gain our approbation!

(The maidens of the first group and first chorus reappear now completely garbed in floral habiliments and looking like flowers. They rush precipitately towards Parsifal.)

Touch not my playmate!
He belongs to me!
No! No! He's mine!

(While those who have returned crowd around Parsifal, the maidens of the second group and chorus hurriedly leave the scene in order to array themselves similarly.)

Ha! The huzzies! They've donned fresher raiment!

(During the following scene, the maidens move around Parsifal in the manner of a children's ring-game and stroke his cheeks caressingly.)

Come! Come! Pretty lover,
Make me your treasure
For your solace and pleasure
I will strive without measure!

Parsifal:

What fragrance you spread!
Are you real flowers?

Maidens:

The fairest blooms
And scents of the bower;
In spring, pluck'd by a pow'r.
We flourish here
In sunshine and summer
To charm and cheer each newcomer.
Now give us your regard
Begrudge not the flowers' reward.
If you can not love us and cherish,
We'll wither and languish and perish!

First Maiden:

Oh, take me, love, in your arms!

Second Maiden:

I'll cool your throbbing temples.

Third Maiden:

For you I've loving caresses!

Fourth Maiden:

Give your lips to my kisses!

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Fifth Maiden:

No! No! I am the fairest!

Sixth Maiden:

No! Sweeter my fragrance.

Parsifal:

You sweet, fragrant tangle of blossoms
Shall I join your frolic
Crowd me not so closely.

Maidens:

Why do you chide?

Parsifal:

Because you quarrel.

Maidens:

We're quarreling for you.
Away from him—He's chosen me!
Let him alone! He favors me!
You drive me away?
Am I then turned away?
Am I refused?
Are you fearful of women?
Are you such a coward?
Oh, fie! So fainthearted and prudish!
To idle butterflies
You'll leave us flowers?
He's cold as ice. A fool!
So shy and cold!
Come, we'll leave him.
Why should we here receive him?
But we will not deceive him!
No! No! No!

Parsifal:

(Half angrily, motioning the maidens off.)

Let be! I'll not be snared!

Kundry:

Parsifal! Tarry!

(Parsifal is about to hurry away when, hearing Kundry's voice from the coppice of flowers, he stops in surprise.)

Parsifal:

"Parsifal?" The name that, dreaming,
My mother once murmured!

Kundry:

Stay! Tarry, Parsifal!
For thee sweet bliss and delight here wait.

(At sound of Kundry's voice, the maidens, terror-stricken, fall back at once from Parsifal.)

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Ye foolish young wantons, leave him in peace.
Frail, quick-fading flowers
Not yours is't to beguile such as he.
Go home; care for your lovers!
Wounded awaits you many a knight.

Maidens:

(*Reluctantly turning away from Parsifal and withdrawing to the palace.*)

Must we leave you? And forever?
Sad the parting, the pity and pain!
From others gladly would we sever
Could we with you remain.
Farewell, you winsome,—gallant, sweet—
Fool!

(*Parsifal glances timidly toward the direction from which the voice had come. The floral coppice has opened and Kundry completely transformed, as a young woman of ravishing beauty, appears. She reclines on a flowery couch and is clad in semi-transparent garments of Arabic style.*)

Parsifal:

Amazement! Am I in a dream?
Didst thou call me who am nameless?

Kundry:

"Thou witless child of sorrow
Fal parsi,—
Thou blameless witling,*
Parsifal.—"
'Twas thus, when in far Araby he died
Thy father, Gamuret, addressed his son unborn,

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* "Wagner has been much criticized for changing the name of his hero from Percival, or Percivale, as we know it in English literature, and Parzival, as he found it in the greatest of all the Grail epics, that of Wolfram von Eschenbach, to Parsifal. Criticism of this kind is often wasted. In making the change, Wagner exercised a poet's privilege for an obvious purpose—he made the name an index of the hero's moral character. The suggestion came from Görres. According to this scholar, whose derivation has long been set aside as fanciful, *fal* in the Arabian tongue signies 'foolish' and *parsi* 'pure one.' By changing the order of the words we obtain Parsi-fal—pure, or guileless fool. . . . In Wolfram's poem he is called foolish because his mother dressed him in motley when he left her broken-hearted to go out into the world in search of knighthood. The French Percival signifies simply 'through the valley.' A Welsh tale of at least equal antiquity with the preserved French romances calls the hero Peredur, which has been interpreted into 'the seeker after the basin or the dish.' Wolfram, under the influence of his (French) model claims nothing for the name of his hero except that it means 'right through the middle'; but Meyer-Markau, who seems to have accepted the theory that the tale is originally Keltic, strove to give dramatic propriety to the name by pointing out that in Welsh, Breton and Cornish *par* signifies lad; *syw,* in Welsh, clad, or decorated, and *fall,* scantily, poorly, ill, foolishly, wretchedly. Out of these words, then, he compounded *Par-syw-fall,* a lad who is ill-clad. Plausibility, if nothing else, is lent to this derivation by the circumstances under which the hero's mother sent him out into the world. In the hope that the rude treatment which would be heaped upon him would return him to her arms, she dressd him in fool's clothing." (*Studis in the Wagnerian Drama,* by H. E. Krehbiel (Harper and Bros.), pages 169-171. Following the plan which he had adopted in this case, Wagner changed the name of Parsifal's mother to *Herzeleide,* Heart's woe, or suffering—the antithesis of our sweet English word, Heartease.)

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Well knowing that he never with mortal eyes
Would e'en look on him.
To bring these tidings I've awaited thee;
What drew thee here save intuition's power?

Parsifal:

I ne'er beheld, not e'en in dreams
What now I see and what with terror fills my soul.
Art thou a flow'r, too,
Of this wondrous garden?

Kundry:

Nay, Parsifal, thou blameless witling,
Far, far from here my dwelling.
'Twas but to meet thee that I have tarried here.
Full long my journey,—many things I've seen.
I saw the child upon its mother's breast,
Its first sweet prattle lingers in my ear.
Though deep in sorrow,
How smiled she at its childish pleasure,
When on each morrow
She hailed her dearest, fondest treasure,
Who, on his mossy couch reclining
With kisses to sweet sleep consigning,
With eyes unsleeping,
Her vigil with anxious care e'er keeping,
Till came the morning,
And tears might fall like dew unheeded.
For grief no comfort, nowhere solace
For thy dear father's love and death!
From fate so hapless to protect thee,
A prayer went out with ev'ry breath
From use of arms, from conflict and its dangers,
Knighthood and thee she tried to keep as strangers.
How heedful, eager all to teach thee
Save that dread knowledge she feared might yet reach thee.
Dost thou not hear the wild, anguish'd cry
When long from home thou didst bide?
Seest thou not still the look did glorify
Her face when again by the side?
When madly thy neck her arms would embrace,—
Did never thy heart then fear her kiss?
Of her great sorrows thou didst not know,
Nor knewest thou of her anguish;
And when at last thou hence didst go,
Thou thoughtst not she might languish.
Long days and nights she waited,
Till time her tears abated;
When grief thus dull'd the pain
For death alone she sighed;—
Great sorrow broke her heart
And Herzeleide died.

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Parsifal:

(Who has been growing more and more serious, now falls overwhelmed at Kundry's feet.)

Woe! Woe! What have I done? Where was I?
Mother! Sweetest, dearest mother!
'Twas I, thy son, that kill'd thee!
O' fool! Blind and blundering fool!
On what errant paths wander'd thy mem'ry?
Heedless, careless of thee,
Sweet, dearest of mothers!

Kundry:

Hast thou not felt sorrow's smart,
Then sweetest comfort
Hath not yet touched thy heart.
The woe that now is thine
Shall yield to bliss divine,
Through love's atoning power.

Parsifal:

(Sinking deeper and deeper in moody sorrow.)

My mother! My mother! How could I forget her?
Ha! What else may I not have forgot?
Whom have I kept within my mind?
Naught but mad folly hath been my life!

Kundry:

(Still reclining, bends over Parsifal, touching his forehead and caressingly encircling his neck with her arm.)

Confession
Of guilt will bring contrition.
And knowledge
Turn folly to recognition.
Learn but the vital passion
Which Gamuret inflamed,
When he thy loving mother
Embraced and wholly claimed.
With sense and soul they did thee then dower
Nor death nor folly 'gainst thee hath power.
So take from me thy mother's blessing and farewell,
Which greet thee both in love's first kiss!

(She bends completely over him and presses a long kiss upon his lips. Parsifal starts up with a gesture of greatest terror. His attitude expresses a fearful change; he presses his hand against his heart as if to repress a terrible pain.)

Parsifal:

Amfortas!
Amfortas! The wound!
The wound my heart is searing!
Woe! Sorrow! Anguish!
Fearful accusation!
The cry of conscience rings in my heart.—
Ah! Woe!

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Piteous wretch!
Hapless victim!
I see the blood outpouring,
But now in me the wound;
Here! Here!
No! No! Not the wound lance-inflicted—
Let that wound bleed in streams if it list!
Here! Here the soul-searing blaze,
The yearning! The madd'ning, awful yearning,
The fierce desire that my senses thralls!
Ah! Passion's torture!
How all within me trembles, thrills,
And throbs in sinful longing!
(In tones of awe.)
I fix my gaze, dull, on the holy cup,—
The sacred blood glows red!
The rapture of redeeming love
Illumes the pious congregation;—
But here—here only, the tortures will not end!
I hear the Saviour's voice of mourning,
The anguished lamentation o'er the defil'd sacristy:
"Redeem me! Rescue me
From impious hands, and wicked!"
The woful lamentation, dol'rous, loud,
Thrills through my being!
And I, the fool, the dastard,
For boyish ventures eager,—hurry on!
Redeemer! Saviour! Lord of Grace!
How may I now such guilt efface!

Kundry:

(Whose astonishment has undergone a change to passionate admiration, attempts timidly to approach Parsifal.)

O noble knight, throw off this spell,
Behold, I love and wish thee well!

Parsifal:

(Still bowed down, stares blindly up at Kundry while she leans over him and executes the caressing blandishments which are described in his words.)

Ha! This was the voice with which she called him!
This was the glance—I well recall it now—
And this, too, this was the smile alluring,—
Her lips thus, thus they quivered with a kiss.
Her head she thus bent o'er him, then rais'd it high in pride.
Thus temptingly shook she her tresses,—
And circled his neck with her arm!
Thus, gently, she stroked his features,—
Mid mad delight and torture
She thus his soul's salvation kissed away!
Ha! That dread kiss!
Thou sorceress! Out of my sight!
Forever get thee hence!

(Parsifal has gradually gained his feet and pushes Kundry from him.)

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Kundry:

Inhuman one!
If thou canst sorrow
For others borrow,
Let me, too, feel thy compassion!
While others saving,
Think on my craving,
Have pity, and bring me salvation!
Through ages eternal,
For thee have I waited,
For the Saviour long have yearned
Whom once I rashly spurned.
Oh! If thou but knew'st the curse
Which haunts me, sleeping, waking,
Me ne'er forsaking,
No respite giving,
Which day by day doth breed anew
Endless torture, endless woe!
I saw—Him—Him—
With laughter mocked Him;
Upon me fell His glance!
Since then I seek through all the world,
And hope that again I may meet Him!
In night's dark woe,
My frenzied mind feels Him to be near.—
Again His glance I see;—
Then comes on the fit of curséd laughter.
A sinner yields to my embraces.
Hell's laughter mocks me—for weep I can not.
With shouting, shrieking, storming,
I plunge again into the mental night
From which, repentant, scarcely I've been waked.*
Oh, thou with death by hunger sharing,
Whom I pursued with scorn unsparing,
Do now thou in thine arms enfold me,
Against thy heart one hour but hold me,
Then, though by God and mankind spurned
I'll feel my soul's salvation earned!

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* "That the talisman of a bloody head upon a salver in the Welsh tale should have suggested the Herodias legend is obvious enough. Wagner's transformation of the legend, accomplished for the purpose of identifying his Kundry with Herodias, is extremely suggestive and felicitous. According to the old tale, Herodias was in love with the prophet of the New Dispensation. After the dance before Herod and its awful consequences, she secretly crept to the head upon the salver for the purpose of covering it with tears and kisses. At that moment a blast issued from the dead lips which sent Herodias flying off into space. Thus she is still driven forward, permitted to rest only from midnight to dawn, when she sits cowering under willow and hazel copses, and bemoans her fate. (It is thus she is found in the third act of Wagner's drama.) In Wagner, she becomes a Wandering Jewess. She saw Christ staggering under the burden of the cross and laughed. His glance fell upon her and doomed her to wander ceaselessly without the sweet refuge of tears, subject to the powers of evil, yet longing to make atonement by deeds of virtue."—*Studies in the Wagnerian Drama*, by H. E. Krehbiel, page 195.

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Parsifal:

Damnation
Endless wouldst thou share with me
If but one moment
In my mission I should falter,
To yield to thy embraces!
For thee salvation, too, I'll win
Wilt thou abstain from carnal sin.
The solace which shall end thy dolor
Yields not the fount whence dolor flows;
Redemption's healing naught shall bring thee
Till that dread fount in thee shall close.
A diff'rent woe, more grievous doles,
A deeper longing fills the souls
Of the brotherhood who, plung'd in sorrow,
Their bodies torture peace to borrow.
But who to us can clearly show
Whence true salvation's waters flow?
Oh, sorrow! Can'st thou succor give
In night of gloom and anguish,
When those who seek for grace divine
In deep damnation's chains still languish?

Kundry:

(*In a wild ecstacy.*)

'Twas then, indeed, my kiss
Endow'd thee with such clairvoyance?
Let love's full rapture embrace thee,
O'er Him Divine it will place thee!
The world's redemption—is this thy aim?
'Twas God this hour created,—
Eternal damnation be my lot,
My pains be unabated!

Parsifal:

Salvation, impious one, may, too, be thine.

Kundry:

(*Entreatingly.*)

Let me but love thee, divine one,
Salvation thou wilt bring to me!

Parsifal:

Love and redemption thee I offer
If on the way to Amfortas thou'lt be my guide.

Kundry:

(*Furiously.*)

No! Never shalt thou find him!
Leave the lecher to his destruction;—
Debauched and defiled he forever,
Fit but for scorning, mocking, laughter!
Ha! Ha! The spear was his own that struck the blow.

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Parsifal:

Whose was the arm dared wield the spear?

Kundry:

His! His! His who my laughter reproved.
His curse,—Ha! It lends me power.
Gainst thee that spear I now invoke
Since thou hast pity for his sin and shame.
Madness! Pity! Hast no pity for me?
Wert thou one hour but mine,—
Were I one hour but thine,
To Amfortas gladly I'd be thy guide.

Parsifal:

Away! Iniquitous wretch!

Kundry:

(She seeks to embrace him; he repulses her violently. She recovers herself in fury calls from the background:)

Hither! Hither! Help!
Ho! Stop the miscreant! This way!
Close every passage. Guard all the roadways!
Shouldst thou escape from here,
And scour the pathways throughout the world,—
One road thou seek'st—the road to him—
Shalt thou find never!
Ev'ry path—ev'ry highway which away from me leads thee
Lo! I close with my curse!
Wander! Wander!
Thou whom I love, take this curse for thy guide.

Klingsor:

(He has stepped out on the castle wall and aims a lance at Parsifal.)

Stay thy steps! Behold a bar thou canst not pass
Presumptuous fool! Ware thy master's spear!

(He hurls the spear which stops suspended over Parsifal's head.)

Parsifal:

(Seizing the spear and holding it above his head.)

With this blest sign I break thy wicked magic.
The wound it inflicted shall be healed by its power.
To waste and destruction, delusion and pomp
It shall bring!

(He makes the sign of the cross with the spear. The castle sinks as if swallowed by an earthquake. The garden turns into a desert, the ground strewn with withered flowers. Kundry sinks to the ground with a shriek. Parsifal, hurrying away, turns again to Kundry from the top of the ruined wall.)

Thou knowest where thou and I
Can meet again.

(He hurries off; Kundry raises her head and looks after him.)

CURTAIN.

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ACT III.

(The opening of the curtain discloses a pleasant vernal landscape in the domain of the Grail. In the background a flowery meadow slopes gently upwards. The foreground is occupied by the edge of a forest which stretches out over a rocky ascent towards the right. Near the edge of the woods a spring opposite to which, a little farther back, the simple hut of a hermit, built against a rock. Time: very early in the morning.

Gurnemanz, greatly aged, clad as a hermit in the tunic of a knight of the grail, steps out of the hut and listens to a sound which he has heard.)

Gurnemanz:

From yonder thicket came the sound.
'Twas not the moan of living beast;
With wails no beast would profane a Good Friday morn.

(Kundry's voice heard in low groans.)

Methinks the wierd lament I've heard before.

(He walks determinedly towards a thicket of thorns. The growth is dense and he pulls the bushes forcibly apart; then stops suddenly.)

Ha! She—here again?
The winter-stript, thorn-covered copse
Kept her concealed. How long, I wonder?
Up, Kundry! Up!
Grim winter is fled and spring is come!
Awake, then; give welcome to spring!

(He draws Kundry, who is stiff and lifeless, out of the bushes and carries her to a nearby grassy mound.)

Rigid, and cold!
This time, surely I thought her dead;
Yet from her lips must have come the moans.
You crackbrain'd drudge,
Have you no word for me?
No word of thanks
That again I roused you
From death-like torpor to life?

(As she lies rigidly stretched out before him, Gurnemanz rubs Kundry's hands and temples. Finally life seems to awaken in her; she rouses herself, opens her eyes and utters a cry. She is clad in the coarse garb of a penitent, as in the first act, but her complexion is paler. Her look and manner have lost their wildness. She stares long at Gurnemanz, then arises, arranges her clothing and hair and appears ready for service.)

(Kundry slowly bows her head. At length she cries hoarsely and brokenly:)

Kundry:

Service! Service!

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Gurnemanz:

(Shaking his head.)

That scarce were worth the while;
There's need of messengers no more.
Herbs and simples
Each one now finds for himself.—
The beasts of the forest taught us how.

(Meanwhile Kundry has looked about, and seeing the hut, has entered it. Gurnemanz looks at her in astonishment.)

Her movements seem to be much changed!
Can the change have been wrought by the day?
Oh, day of grace past conceiving!
No doubt for her salvation
It was permitted me to rouse her
From her slumber.

(Kundry comes out of the hut; she carries a pitcher and goes with it to the spring. Looking towards the forest she sees some one approaching and calls the attention of Gurnemanz to the fact.)

Who yonder nears the holy spring
With sombre arms and harness?
A stranger knight, for certain.

(As Parsifal enters, Kundry disappears again into the hut. Parsifal enters from the forest, clad wholly in black armor, with visor down and lowered spear. He walks slowly with bowed head, his manner dreamily hesitant. He seats himself upon the grassy mound.
Having observed Parsifal for a space, Gurnemanz approaches him.)

All hail, Sir Knight!
Hast lost thy way? May I not direct thee?

(Parsifal gently shakes his head.)

Hast thou no greeting on thy lips?

(Parsifal lowers his head.)

What, no word?
If vow it be that constrains thee
To be silent, a duty rests on me
To counsel thee of what is meet.—
Thou standest here on hallow'd ground,
Where none should warlike weapons bear—
Like helmet, visor, shield and spear,
At least today! Dost thou know
What holy day this is?

(Parsifal shakes his head.)

Speak! Where hast thou been,
In what vile pagan land sojourned,
Not to know that this is the dawn
Of thrice-holy Good Friday morn?

(Parsifal droops his head deeper.)

Quick! Doff thy weapons!
Grieve not the Lord
Who bared His body on this day,
And for a sinful world His atoning blood did shed.

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(After a further moment of silence, Parsifal rises, thrusts his spear into the ground, lays shield and sword beside it, raises his visor, takes the helmet from his head and places it beside the other weapons; then kneels in silent prayer before the spear. Gurnemanz watches him with wonder and emotion. He beckons to Kundry, who has reappeared from the hut. Parsifal lifts his eyes in devotion to the point of his lance. Gurnemanz speaks softly to Kundry.)

Do you know him now?
'Tis he whose arrow killed the swan.

(Kundry gently nods assent.)

'Tis he, indeed—
The fool whom I rudely thrust away.

(Kundry looks fixedly but calmly at Parsifal.)

Ha! He has wandered far since then.
The spear—I know it well.

(With great emotion.)

O, holy day, whose advent
Is again vouchsafed to me!

(Kundry has turned her face away. Parsifal rises from his knees, slowly, and glancing about recognises Gurnemanz and gently offers his hand in greeting.)

Parsifal:

*What joy, that again I have found thee!

Gurnemanz:

Then thou knowest me still,
Despite the changes which grief and care have wrought in me.
How cam'st thou here—and whence?

Parsifal:

Through error and through devious wand'rings
Came I; and am I suffered now to think them ended,
Since I am blest with sounds
Of this sweet forest's murmurs,
And thou, good sage, hast giv'n me greeting?
Or doth error still pursue me,
For changed to me are all things?

Gurnemanz:

But tell—to whom the way thou'rt seeking.

Parsifal:

To him whose lamentation
In stupid folly I once heard.
To bring him healing, surcease from suff'ring
Mayhap I'm sent. But, alas!
To find the pathway seem'd denied me;—
To wander in error I was forc'd by a wicked curse.
Cares without number, quarrels and conflicts,
Forced me to leave the pathway
Whene'er I thought myself right.
Then fear and desperation seized me.
To guard in safety the sacred relic,
And shield it—from harm protect it,—
I suffered hurts and wounds manifold.
The spear itself I ne'er dared carry into battle—
Unprofaned at my side e'er I bore it
That safe I might restore it.
Behold it gleaming clean and clear,
The Grail's most sacred spear!

---

*Omitted at the performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York.

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Gurnemanz:

(*In a transport of joy.*)

Oh, Mercy's highest weal!
O marvel, O surpassing wonder.

Gurnemanz:

(*To Parsifal, after somewhat composing himself.*)

Sir Knight, if 'twas a curse
Constrained thee from the path to stray,
Be sure the spell is broken.
Here art thou—this the Grail's domain;
Thy coming now the knights await.

*Ah! They have need of succor,—
All healing in thy power.
Since thy sojourn in the Grail's domain
The affliction which thou cam'st to know,
The apprehension, has grown to direful woe!
Amfortas, by his torments driven,
By his soul's great torture maddened,
In defiant agony raving, longs for death.
No prayer, no pleading of his knights
Can prevail on him to perform his sacred function.
The shrine, unopened, long has hid the Grail;
Its guardian, sore his sin repenting,
Knowing he needs must live if on the cup he looks,
Thus seeks his dissolution,
And with life's end he hopes for torture's ending.
The heav'nly manna we are now denied;
With vulgar food must we content us;
Our old puissance thus has oozed away;
No messengers come now,
No summons more they bring to holy warfare;
Wan and wretched, fill'd with dread,—
The knights of leader, courage and of hope bereft!

Here, in this forest I seclusion sought,
For death in patience waiting,—
The lot which hath my lord-in-arms o'erta'en.
For Titurel, my pious lord,
No more sustained by sight of the holy vessel,
Expir'd—a man—no more.

Parsifal:

(*Springing up in grief.*)

And I am he who all this woe have wrought!
Ah! With what transgressions, what a weight of sin,
Must this mad, foolish head
Forevermore be burdened,
Since no repentance, no atonement
To folly can bring pardon!
To me a saving work was given,
But I, through false endeavour,
The grace have forfeited forever!

(*He seems about to fall in a faint. Gurnemanz sustains him and places him seated on the mound. Kundry hastens to bring a basin of water to revive him.*)

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Gurnemanz:

(Gently rejecting Kundry's offer.)

Not that!
The pilgrim's weary feet
We'll lave with water from the sacred spring.
Mayhap he will today be called to holy service.
To minister a holy function.
Let him be free from stain; from devious wandering's dust
See that he's clean and pure again.

(The two gently turn Parsifal towards the spring. During the following, Kundry loosens his greaves, but Gurnemanz removes his breastplate.)

Parsifal:

(Gently and wearily.)

Straightway to Amfortas wilt thou now lead me?

Gurnemanz:

Most surely; for us waits the castle hall.
The funeral rites of my long-lov'd lord
Demand my presence there.
Again to reveal the Grail, from us long hidden,
His sore-neglected office and function to perform,
To consecrate a sov'reign father
Who by his son's great sin was slain,
For which he now would fain atone—
A vow Amfortas made.

(Kundry with humble zeal bathes Parisfal's feet; he gazes on her with silent wonderment.)

Parsifal:

(To Kundry.)

Thou hast washed my feet with water,—
Do now, my friend, thou moisten my head.

(Gurnemanz takes water from the spring in his hands and besprinkles Parsifal's head.)

Gurnemanz:

Through purity, thou pure one,
Be thou blesséd!
And ev'ry sin-caused care
Depart from thee for aye!

(While Gurnemanz is performing this ceremony, Kundry takes a gold flask from her bosom and pours part of its contents over Parsifal's feet, drying them with her hair, which she has hastily unbound.)

Parsifal:

(Gently taking the flask from Kundry's hand and passing it to Gurnemanz.)

My feet hast thou anointed,—
Anoint my head, thou venerable knight,
That e'en today as king the guild may hail me.

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Gurnemanz:

(Pouring the contents of the flask on Parsifal's head and placing his hands on it in blessing.)

Thus was it all appointed!
My blessing then receive,
Thou king today anointed,—
Thou pure one,
Pity-inspir'd one,
Help-bringing knowing one!
Since the redeem'd one's suff'rings
Thou hast suffered, remove from him
The last remaining load.

Parsifal:

(Having unnoticed taken water from the spring in his hands, bends over Kundry, who is kneeling before him, and pours it over her head.)

My primal task I thus perform:
Be thou baptized,
Believe in the Redeemer!

(Kundry sinks her head to the ground and appears to weep, passionately. Parsifal turns about, and with gentle ecstasy, gazes upon woods and meadows now bathed in the light of morning.)

Are not the meadows strangely fair today?
True, I did meet some marvellous flowers
Which sought around my neck to twine their tendrils;
And yet so fresh ne'er seemed before
The grasses, frondage and blossoms;
Nor did their fragrance seem so sweet,
Or speak with such appeal to me!

Gurnemanz:

That is Good Friday's magic, lord!

Parsifal:

What sayest thou? That day of agony,
When all that liveth, all that buds and blossoms,
All that its life renews,
Should only mourn and sorrow!

Gurnemanz:

Thou see'st it is not so.
For sinners' tears, wept in contrition,
Today, like holy dew,
The groves and fields renew!
Hence 'tis that thus they flourish.
All living things today rejoice,
They hear again the Saviour's voice,
And Him in heart they cherish!
Upon the cruel cross they cannot behold Him
And therefore up to man redeemed they look,
Who feels acquit of guilt and sinful burden,
Through God's redeeming love made pure and whole.

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Each blade of grass, each twig and tiny blossom,
Is conscious that this day can come no harm.
But that as God, with mercies manifold,
Remembered man, and for him died,
So man this day will be less bold
And walk with careful stride.
Now grateful all things animate
Which live a moment and go hence,
That all-absolved they may await
And greet this day of innocence.

(Kundry has slowly again lifted her head, looks with moist eyes in serious, quiet appeal.)

Parsifal:

I saw them wither, that once laughed gaily,
Are they, too, for redemption longing?
And e'en thine eyes with blesséd dew are filling,—
Thou'rt weeping—See, the fields are smiling!
(He kisses her gently on the forehead.)

Gurnemanz:

Mid-day:—the time is come.
Give leave, my Lord, that thy servant conduct thee.

(Gurnemanz has brought out his mantle as a knight of the grail and with Kundry's help, places it upon Parsifal who, solemnly taking up the lance, with Kundry, slowly follows Gurnemanz, who leads the way. The scene gradually changes to a landscape like that of the first act, but from right to left. After a short time the three are lost to sight as the wood changes into vaulted passages of rocks. The chiming of bells becomes more and more audible in the rocky vaults. Finally the scene opens into the great hall of the Grail Temple, as in the first act, save that the refection tables are missing. Faint illumination. From one side approach knights of the grail bearing Titurel in his coffin, from the other a similar train escorting Amfortas on his litter, preceded by the grail in its shrine and pall.

First Train of Knights:

With solemn steps, within screening pall,
The grail we bear to the altar;
What hide ye there in darksome shrine,
And, mourning, hitherward bring?

Second Train of Knights:

A holy hero lies in the shrine,
There, too, lies the heavenly pow'r,
Which God Himself once took to His care—
Titurel hither we bring.

First Train:

How came he to die who had care divine,
Whom God Himself protected?

Second Train:

The burden of age o'erwhelmed him at last
When the sight of the grail was denied him.

First Train:

Who was it withheld the life-giving vision?

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Second Train:

His couch ye are bearing—the cup's faithless keeper.

First Train:

For the last time, today, we bear him hither
That his final service may be giv'n to his office.

Both Trains:

Anguish! For the last, last time
Do thy office fulfil!
Sorrow! For the last, last time
Guardian of the Grail,
Do thy office fulfil!

Amfortas:

(Wearily raising himself slightly.)

Aye! Curse me! Let me be accurst!
Your thoughts find echo in my heart.
Liever yet would I take death from you—
For sin like mine a small atonement.
My father!
Blest in honor o'er all heroes!
Pure; blameless; to whom e'en angels made obeisance,
For whom my life I'd gladly giv'n,
To thee I brought death!
Thou who art now before the blesséd Saviour,
And gazing on His face,
Beseech thou Him that His most sacred blood,
If that today to the Templars
Its blessings shall be granted,
That with their new awaking
My suff'ring may have surcease in death!
Death—gracious, final, mercy!
These terrible tortures, this pain,
Oh, end them!
Put them to rest; and with them my heart!
In mercy, my father, as I plead
Plead thou for me:
"Redeemer, grant relief to my son!"

Knights of the Grail:

Uncover the grail! Do thy office!
Thy father commands! Thou must!

Amfortas:

(Springing up in raging despair and rushing into the midst of the knights.)

No! Nevermore! Ha!
Kind death is approaching! I feel it.
Yet again ye'd summon me back to life!
Mad are ye all!
Who to live would compel me
When 'tis for death I am longing?

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Here am I—and here my bleeding wound,
Out with your weapons! Bury them deeply—
Here, here, up to the hilt!
Come, do not waver!
Use well your weapons and do not fail,
Perchance then of itself shall shine the Grail!

Parsifal:

(The knights have all fallen back in fear, leaving Amfortas standing alone in a horrible ecstasy. Parsifal, accompanied by Gurnemans and Kundry, has appeared unnoticed among the knights. He now steps forward and with the point of the spear, touches the side of Amfortas.)

For thee one help alone! Only the spear
Which struck the wound can bring relief.

(The features of Amfortas light up as with sacred rapture. He staggers with emotion and is supported by Gurnemans.)

Be whole, forgiven and absolved!
Thy office henceforth be my charge;
And blest be all thy suff'ring,
Which gave compassion's power
And wisdom's potent dower,
To him, the timrous fool!

(Parsifal walks solemnly towards the centre, holding high the spear in front of him.)

The sacred lance, behold! I bring it back!
O crowning marvel of great joy!
The spear which healed the bleeding body,
Itself now drips a current ruddy,
In conscious kinship with the pulsing wave
Which throbs within the holy vessel.
Never again be it hid from sight!
Uncover the grail! Open the shrine!

(Parsifal ascends the steps to the altar, takes the grail out of its shrine, which had been opened by the youths, and kneels in silent prayer before it. A gradual glow illumines the grail. The hall grows lighter.)

Choirs:

(Knights, voices from the middle and finally from the heights of the dome.)

Wonder of salvation:
Redemption to the Saviour!

(A ray of light falls from the dome and the grail glows in full refulgence. A dove soars down from the heights and hovers over Parsifal's head. Kundry, her face lifted to Parsifal's, slowly sinks lifeless to the floor. Amfortas and Gurnemans kneel in homage before Parsifal, who waves the grail in blessing over the worshipping company of knights. Slow curtain.)

THE END.

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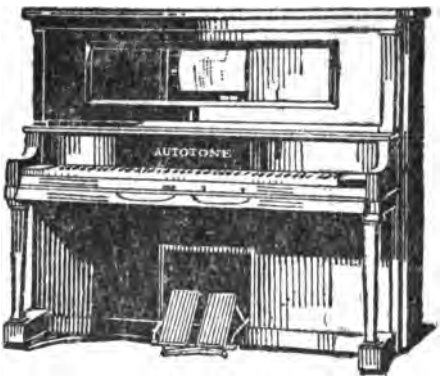

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